

## The Relation between the Self (Mümtaz) and the "Other" (Suat) in Ahmet Hamdi Tanpinar's *A Mind at Peace* (Huzur)

Aysel Kamal\*

### Abstract

Ahmet Hamdi Tanpinar (1901-1961) is one of the most widely studied researchers among Turkish writers in modern literary. The works of Ahmet Hamdi Tanpinar are being studied within the framework of science branches such as psychology, sociology, philosophy, especially literature.

Tanpinar has studied the works of leading psychologists such as S. Freud and C. Jung on human and self. In Tanpinar's creativity, everything is shaped around a human being. Components such as life, death, love, time and setting come to life with the human compound.

This is the reason that Tanpinar is constantly right after every conscious person. As for a conscious person, he needs another to become aware of his own self. Tanpinar implies to readers the repressed conscious side of the Mumtaz character with the help of Suat character in the novel "Huzur". The characters given as these two opposing poles in the novel are actually regarded as outpouring ideas stemming from suppressed sides of Mumtaz's consciousness.

The purpose of the study is to reveal how the construction of a common identity evolved as an outpouring of Mumtaz (I) and Suat (the other) characters in the novel "Huzur" of Ahmet Hamdi Tanpinar.

**Keywords:** Ahmet Hamdi Tanpinar, Huzur, Self, I and "Other", Subconsciousness

### Introduction

When considering his time and prevailing conditions back then, Ahmet Hamdi Tanpinar was an author who lived beyond his time. When scrutinising works by Tanpinar, more specifically his novels, stories, poems, academic articles, journals and letters, it will be seen that he was a man of letters who could not be confined merely to literature as he would be eligible for many other research studies. Tanpinar has always sought what is new and beautiful. According to Tanpinar, one is not to make concessions on the past, cultural values and personal self for the sake of new and beautiful.

Ahmet Hamdi Tanpinar made maximum good use of other literary works and fine arts when producing his works. It is already known that music, architecture, painting, fine arts, by large, are the satisfying decorative backgrounds in the novels and stories by Tanpinar. The conscious self is one of the essential elements Tanpinar emphasises in his works. Philosophy and psychology are the fields in which Ahmet Hamdi Tanpinar was interested and endeavoured to build his works upon within the framework of information and knowledge he searched for and acquired. One of the essential reasons why Ahmet Hamdi Tanpinar places a combination of dreams, death and cognition at the roof of aesthetics is to establish a conscious self.

On examining the journals and letters by Tanpinar, it is understood that characters created by the author bear pieces from his personal self. *A Mind at Peace*, both with the theme and the characters, gives the idea that it has borrowed traces from Ahmet Hamdi Tanpinar's private life. Researchers of Tanpinar have consensus that Mumtaz from *A Mind at Peace* represents Ahmet Hamdi Tanpinar himself, while İhsan represents Yahya Kemal, the mentor to Tanpinar whose opinions are knowledge are unique to him.

Suppressed and subconscious aspects of Mumtaz, a character created for *A Mind at Peace* are presented to the reader through Suat, the other. As he meets Suat, Mumtaz gets to know his self and discovers the suppressed parts within him.

### Self and the "Other"

*"Ego describes "who the individual is", it is shaped after relationship of the individual with others, and is defined based on feedbacks given by others for our behaviours, and our relationship with them"* (Bilgin, 2001, p. 156). Tanpinar summarises ego as a fairy tale. According to Tanpinar, when an individual builds up its ego, he combines residuals from the

\* Ph.D. Student, Faculty of Education and Humanities, Turkish Philology Program, International Black Sea University, Tbilisi, Georgia  
E-mail: ayselkamal@ibsu.edu.ge

past with the sum of dreams and liberties that will guide it to the future. *"I long have believed that the essential goal is to find ourselves or to embody it because maybe there is no real personality and what we call ego is our original or the biggest generation and passion, our fairy tale in a simple word"* (Emil, 2013, p. 344). Tanpinar defends ego is home to culture. According to Tanpinar, the bearing elements of ego are heredity, race and the dead. These three elements that lie beneath the self-satisfy their own reveries and passion for happiness (Emil, 2013, p. 144).

As Mumtaz meets Suat after his death, he actually unites with his own ego. *"Mumtaz's ego is in the palm of Suat."* According to Mehmet Can Dogan, Tanpinar lives through Mumtaz's ego through Suat. He could be with Nuran so long as Suat was alive. Upon death of Suat, Mumtaz's ego is no more (Dogan, 2008, p. 565). Mumtaz begins to see things severally. He says to the man that happens to materialise next to him, that he does not unite anything with the other. Pain and farewells have brought him to maturity, enabling him to strip off his ego and begin to see the truth. The other that Mumtaz meets is Suat. Mumtaz watched his ego reflected on the mirror held by Suat. He looked at the things behind his ego that is why he did not unmask the truth. *"...Because back then you looked around behind your own ego. You watched yourself. Neither life nor objects are holistic. Wholeness is a fantasy of the mind. ...Do I not have ego now? ...No. It is in my palm. Do you believe it? Look, it is here"* (Tanpinar, 2014, pP. 412-413). The diamond, which was sparkling not for dazzling but for lustre, as Suat held it in his hand was Mumtaz's ego. Mumtaz was aware that Suat died. Death made him handsome and stronger. Even though he felt uncomfortable with Suat being next to him, he himself kept Suat there at all times. Moran explains the affinity between Suat and Mumtaz as follows: *"There is affinity between Suat and part of Mumtaz's mind that seeks after death. That is to say, Suat represents the "other self" or some kind of subconsciousness that judges his behaviours and seeks death for salvation"* (Moran, 2013, p. 293). Mumtaz meets the "other", that is, Suat and it appears for the first time to the reader in part titled as Suat in the novel. When seeing him off, Mumtaz expresses different sense of feeling while saying goodbye to Suat as follows: *"...He seemed content to have his hand back from his big, bonny and sweaty palms of clamps. For no reasons seeing his hand in his palm on this bizarre night intimidated Mumtaz. The sticky press gave him a chimera of a disposal penetrating through his soul"* (Tanpinar, 2014, p. 319). Upon Suat's death, affinity of the self and the other between the two characters gains more density. One of the attention-grabbing elements in these meetings is that Mumtaz is symbolised by the fact that his other self, that is, his side that is "captive" to his ego is in Suat's palms. At their second meeting, Mumtaz's ego is in Suat's palms:

*"...You looked around behind your own ego. You watched yourself. Neither life nor objects are holistic. Wholeness is a fantasy of the mind.*

*- Do I not have ego now?*

*- No. It is in my palm. Do you believe it? Look, it is here. He extends his palm towards Mumtaz' nose. A tiny and weird animal, something in between a shell and a skin not known to him moved in the palm in small constrictions.*

*-Now, that is the ego then! He thought to himself, but said nothing. Because that man's hand surprised him (Tanpinar, 2014, p. 414)."*

Unlike their first meet, Mumtaz this time meets the other knowingly and consciously. As a result of this second meet, his ego in the palm of Suat bestows pleasure and peace of mind rather than intimidation and chill. Things reach significance in oxymoron inasmuch as the ego reaches significance along with the other. *"Suat, he said. Why are you here? Why do you not leave me to be?"*

*- Why should I? Mumtaz, I have always been where I am!*

*- What is it that you want of me? Why insisting?*

*This is no insisting. It is a duty. My duty is to accompany you. I have become a guardian angel to you (Tanpinar, 2014, p. 415)."*

Ego is a personal being the individual possesses, it distinguishes the individual from others and is acquired in community. Our experience with the self are indirect whereas our opinions of others are direct; that is to say, "man is a mirror to man." *"Once cannot see the self just like he cannot see his face without looking at the glass. Our relationship with others is a reflection of relationship with the self. In this context, identity is a plural concept, and it is a home for other identities (Tatar, 2014, pp. 92-93)."* *"Do you know the saddest part of our history, Mumtaz? A man occupies himself with another man only. The entire building is established upon it both inside and outside. Whether knowingly or unknowingly, man uses and treats other men as if a material. Our grudges, spites, megalomaniac aspirations, love and despise and hope are all about it.... Human beings consume life by tearing into others (Tanpinar, 2014, p. 368)."* What brings out the love, grudge, compassion, hostility within us is the other. Jan Assmann stresses that diversity is needed for unity and others are needed for the self. Identity serves diversity, alterity serves to build up self-confidence for the identity. *"A well-defined diversity is a requirement that is imbedded in the logic behind the identity. Building up of the alterity is a trick that easily penetrates through the logic (Tatar, 2014, p. 93)."* Mumtaz is able to notice underlying jealous, insecure and cynical characteristic traits within him because of the feelings Suat has for Nuran. *"As if there was a magician, a very cruel one that takes pleasure in unthinkable torments at the back of his mind. It changes everything in a blink of the eye, conjures away the material, materialises immaterial, spoils and discharges not only the meaning of the knows but all the past memories, history, makes a never-ending torment out of every single dream that is the zest of moments of loneliness. And Mumtaz is capable of hearing its biting, piercing inner voice and insidious wiggle"*

with a rage not known to him at all" (Tanpinar, 2014, p. 334).

"Alterity takes, before all, a minimum similarity is a must for discovering one self and finding the self in the other when differentiating" (Karaduman, 2010, p. 2889). Difference or alterity functions as a negative counter-guarantee for the self. The other calls upon what is - or is not - different from the self. Awareness of differences unveils the self. When an individual establishes the self, it makes use of religious and national assets of the society that makes it. "Now that means of production have changed and such change is reflected onto social life, individual responsibilities have increased, identity of the self has replaced collective identity; modernism has already begun to interact with the societal belonging correlation where individual is perceived as an identity all by itself in the neo-thinking system" (Karaduman, 2010, p. 2890). "I take responsibility for my opinions" If Suat had heard me say so, «What opinions, dear Mumtaz?...he would say bursting with laughter because Suat was a different kind of man. "He did not like me nor did he take me seriously. But I liked him. Did he really do so?" (Tanpinar, 2014, p. 369). Tanpinar makes his character utter this sentence as he grows conscious of his ego. Can a human being possibly love somebody else more than he does love himself? Or for whom does a human being love. Was Mumtaz's love for Nuran really for her or was it within Mumtaz and for his own pleasure? Then again Mumtaz discover the self within him through his feelings for Suat.

Suat was the side of Mumtaz, who lived the life. Aesthetic and sense of beauty between Mumtaz and Suat differed though. What is beautiful and aesthetic for Mumtaz is the literary things while what is beautiful and aesthetic for Suat is social life and night life. When Suat asks Mumtaz to write a story he points to the difference between the two. According to Suat, he is the one who lives through life in joy while Mumtaz is the one who is engaged in the act of writing.

"Mumtaz interrupted for the first time:

- Well, but who do you want me to write it and why don't you do it yourself?

- Simple as this. You are the storey-teller. You like writing. We have different roles in life. I only exist (Tanpinar, 2014, p. 313)". Mumtaz reveals parts of him that has a peace of mind, happy with his life, has dreams and rules over the time, Mumtaz is the other self who runs away from his liabilities and binding terms in life, has cast aside his life and lives in the course of others and in their torment (thief, murderer, disabled etc.), having their dreams.

"Ego is a state of self-consciousness. "It does not only mean self-consciousness of those around us but also consciousness for the self. Different from self-consciousness, ego is needed for recognising and distinguishing those around it (Turkbag, 2003, p. 210). Characters created by Tanpinar, namely, Mumtaz and Suat, were both aware of their self as well as the common grounds and differences with the other. "These are the best days in Istanbul... The fall is unprecedented. He then turned to Nuran. Never mind Mumtaz, he is sad over winter rains in fall... Do you know what causes all this? She looked

at Mumtaz with fondness, and smiled. -That he covers himself more too much... I used to advise in his childhood that he had better not cover more than enough. Those that cover too much have too many daydreams they say;

- Mumtaz, how many times do you live your entire life in one day?" (Tanpinar, 2014, p. 258).

Mumtaz looks at life behind the scenes of the past and reveries while Suat enjoys the moment detached from the past and future.

The two characters designed as the self and the other self respectively by Tanpinar differ in musical insights, too. Mumtaz cannot cut ties off with the moments in traditional and alaturca music, seeking love and pleasure on the hills of the past; Suat believes music breaches time, annihilates the state of being, it immaterialises the main point at issue and life acquires meaning as one retires from the state of being. "Music was not a good means for love... he thought. Because music played above and beyond the time. Music was the movement of time; it annihilated state of being. Main point at issue, however, puts stress on the moment. What was there to love if one is not happy?" (Tanpinar, 2014, p. 299). Tanpinar implies that Suat's intention of materialising where Mumtaz and Nuran are present does not serve to catch happiness, on the very contrary, it serves to cause agony in him and to make each other miserable.

## Conclusion

Ahmet Hamdi Tanpinar defended that one of the essential factors for preserving cultural assets was primarily the past and individual ego. For this reason, Tanpinar created each of his characters with a touch of societal and individual ego.

Tanpinar seeks after the conscious self. By nature of aesthetic motives, he, at times, resorted to reflect bearers of the self through unconscious elements, such as dreams, death, past and similar constituents.

In *A Mind at Peace*, Mumtaz is introduced to the reader as the one, who embodies peace, love, compassion and any other positive opinions and warm feelings while Suat, on the other hand, is a character capable of doing evil to other and also to himself on purpose, who is merciless, hostile to the prevailing conditions and the life itself as well as any living things- whether man or animal- that is happy. One should bear in mind that Suat and Mumtaz are one very same character, only that one is the suppressed subconscious of the other. Suat, in his states of psychosis, reflects a suppressed version of Mumtaz while Mumtaz, as a man of dreams, is the representative of the life combined on a common ground of pleasures and joys, which Suat desires to live.

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